



Retiring Selectman Jim Murphy pauses in front of Town Hall.

Staff Photo by Chris Bernstein

Murphy Bids Adieu to Public Service

By Lesley Mahoney

James Murphy has his Monday nights free now. And instead of speaking as a town official at future town meetings, he will air his views as a private citizen.

Retiring from 10 years of public service - including a three-year term on the Board of Selectmen - the former selectmen chairman

plans to devote his newly found free time to his family and his business.

Murphy chose not to seek reelection when his term on the Board of Selectmen expired last month.

Murphy, 50, first stepped into the public arena shortly after he moved to Duxbury from Cumberland, Maine in 1982. Alan Bornheimer,

who was recently elected to his 16th term as town moderator, and his wife, Deborah, approached Murphy while he was walking along Duxbury Beach with his wife, Barbara.

One thing led to another, said Murphy, who was appointed to the Finance Committee one year later.

Through the years, Murphy has

served on the Fiscal Advisory Committee, the School Committee where he participated in the selection process for a new school superintendent and town manager, the North Hill Advisory Committee and the Ashdod Fire Station Committee.

While he chaired the Finance

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Committee, Fiscal Advisory Committee and the Board of Selectmen, Murphy said "there was no game plan" for his public service career.

But Murphy did say there was some sort of natural progression in moving from the Finance Committee to the Fiscal Advisory Committee.

"Once I built a reputation, I was asked to do other things," he said.

Murphy, who has a bachelor's degree in economics and master's degree in finance from the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, remembers the year he chaired the Finance Committee as an intense year. It was the last year before Duxbury hired a town manager and the Finance Committee did the entire budget.

"It was a very intense process," he said.

On the Fiscal Advisory Committee, Murphy recalls working on the draft of five-year fiscal plan, which included focusing attention to a long-neglected capital project plan.

Murphy worked on the School Committee's long-range plan, which included the idea of moving from industrial arts to technology and computer science.

Murphy said his most difficult time of service was when the School Committee voted to close the Lower Alden School four years ago due to a decrease in state aid and low revenues.

"People were very emotional and very angry," said Murphy who at the time suggested the plan to close the school to address the budget crunch. "But, it was clear

in my mind it was either that or lay off teachers."

In retrospect, with the reopening of the Alden School slated for this fall, Murphy said, "I think it all worked out."

As a selectman, Murphy said he was a strong advocate for the town's long range plan which was presented in partial form at the recent annual town meeting.

"The beginning of it is in place, but it needs some fleshing out," Murphy said. "It means taking your eyes off the trees and putting them on the forest."

Murphy also expressed satisfaction regarding the construction of the shared Snug Harbor and Bluefish River septic system. He gave credit to the Board of Health for that project.

Looking back on a decade of public service, Murphy said he has only one disappointment. That is that the North Hill Golf Course was not approved for 18 holes.

He does, however, hold out hope that the golf course will expand someday.

While he does not plan to hold public office again, Murphy said he will be a vocal participant at future town meetings expressing his ideas regarding the direction of town government.

He said he does not favor the By-Law Review Committee's recommendation to increase the Board of Selectmen to five members.

"I think three is fine. It's hard enough to get three people to agree," he said.

He also said the town should address water-related issues and

the reopening of the Ashdod Fire Station which has been under consideration since he was elected to the Board of Selectmen three years ago.

His advice to his successor?

"Maintain your independence. That's not always easy to do. Think the decision through and do what is right," he said. "All people won't agree. But, if you're convinced in your own mind that a decision is in the best interest of the town, then you are probably doing the right thing."

Murphy encouraged people to get involved in town government.

"Everyone in Duxbury has talent," he said, noting with so many committees on the town and school side, there is a place for everyone.

"If you are serious about helping, there is a place where you can take your skills," he said.

Getting involved, he promised will give one "a sense of accomplishment and a sense of helping the community."

While Murphy said the current lack of public participation in town government is disappointing, he said it's an indication that people are leading busy lives "being good parents and good employees."

"I think in general, people feel that the town is being run pretty well," he said.

Murphy, who owns New England Realty Resources, a commercial real estate firm in Boston, lives on Barn Swallow Lane with his wife, Barbara, and his daughter, Michelle, who is a sophomore at Harvard University.